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XMAS RUSH KILLS POTENTIAL HITS

These are just some of the artists who had new singles released during the few weeks immediately before Christmas. There is still a chance that one or two will break into the NME Chart in the New Year. But for the vast majority, their latest releases are inevitably doomed to failure—because of the abnormal competition to which the market is unnecessarily subjected during the big Christmas build-up... a build-up which looks like developing into a let-down for most of these stars.

DESMOND DEKKER, DUSTY SPRINGFIELD, EQUALS, LOVE AFFAIR, LULU, UP-SETTERS, MARVIN GAYE, BOOKER T. & THE M.G.'s, MAX ROMEO, KINKS, MOODY BLUES, FOUNDATIONS, SAM AND DAVE, HERMAN'S HERMITS, KAREN YOUNG, PIONEERS, ROBIN GIBB, LOU CHRISTIE, TEMPTATIONS, ISLEY BROTHERS, GLEN CAMPBELL, MAMA CASS and CROSBY, STILLS & NASH.

— 'It won't happen again!'

ONCE again this year, the mad scramble of Christmas releases has taken its toll of big-name artists. At least two dozen pop singles, which would have been automatic Chart entries at any other time of the year, were completely swamped by the pre-Christmas rush—which saw practically every major pop name striving for hit parade honours with discs issued in November and December. But this could be the last time it happens, because recording companies and artists alike are finally waking up to the impracticability of their seasonal saturation policy.

A spokesman for one of Britain's largest disc firms told the NME: "A record in the Chart in November sells three times as many copies as it would do, say, in February. Which is fine for the discs in the hit parade! The trouble is that we have so many unexpected flops at this time of the year, this cancels out any benefits we gain from the big sellers."

"The situation got completely out of hand this year. There were far too many releases. And we shall certainly take steps another year to avoid this intense concentration of Chart contenders."

A comment from one of the above artists... "Someone is bound to suffer in this deluge of singles. And when that happens, it's a tremendous blow to one's prestige. I know that in future I shall avoid November and December releases like the plague, whatever my recording manager might say!"

Derek Johnson writes: "In addition to the discs listed above, there are many more which I consider would have been logical Chart contenders at a less congested time of the year. These include Van Doornican, the Box Tops, Vanity Fare, Jimi Hendrix, Roy Orbison, Gene Pitney, Peter Paul and Mary and the farewell disc by Amen Corner."

DEKKER BACK TO JAMAICA

Desmond Dekker is dropping all British dates for February in order to return to Jamaica for one month, in which he will record a new LP with his a-and-r man, Leslie Kong. Desmond will then return to this country for further appearances.

SAM & DAVE, JOE TEX CONCERT DATES SET

FOUR British concert dates have now been set for the Atlantic-Atco soul revue, which is to tour Europe this month for promoter Arthur Howes. As previously reported, the package opens at London Royal Albert Hall on January 22, and further dates confirmed this week are at Croydon Fairfield Hall (23), Manchester Odeon (24) and Birmingham Odeon (25). The show then travels to the Continent for concerts.

Package line-up includes Sam and Dave, Joe Tex, Arthur Conley and Clarence Carter. Sam and Dave will be accompanied by their full orchestra of American

musicians, while Joe Tex is also bringing his own band — thus giving the show a total complement of over two dozen performers and musicians.

Canned Heat concerts

SEVEN British concert dates have now been set for U.S. group Canned Heat, which begins an extensive European tour next week. It flies into this country from the Continent on Wednesday, January 21, and the same evening stars at Newcastle City Hall. Subsequent dates include Liverpool Philharmonic Hall (22), Brighton Dome (23), Bournemouth Winter Gardens (24), Croydon Fairfield Hall (25), Birmingham Town Hall (26) and London Royal Albert Hall (30).

It is possible that one or two extra dates may be added to this itinerary. Keith Relf's Renaissance is principal supporting attraction on all the dates, and Spooky Tooth is added for the Albert Hall concert. Canned Heat — whose new single "Let's Work Together" is being rush-released by Liberty — flies to Germany on January 31 to resume its continental dates.

concert on Friday, May 2, and this is still believed to be the biggest one-nighter fee ever paid to a solo artist. The event is a Governor's charity performance at Freedom Hall, Louisville, on the eve of the renowned Kentucky Derby.

SOLO DISC DEBUT BY MAURICE GIBB

ALTHOUGH Barry Gibb last month announced that he had quit the Bee Gees in order to pursue a solo career, brother Maurice Gibb — who was left as the only remaining member of the group — is the first to come up with a solo venture! He has completed his first solo single titled "Railroad," on which he sings and provides all the musical accompaniment — with the exception of drums and the string section. Maurice also wrote, produced and engineered the track — as he did the other side, "I've Come Back."

Barry Gibb is currently on holiday in Scotland, where he is staying with his girl friend's parents. On his return to London, Barry will be consulted as to whether Maurice's solo disc should be released. If it is — and there seems no logical reason why it should not be — it will be issued under the name of Maurice Gibb.

Meanwhile, in view of pressures from his brother and his manager, Barry is considering a possible reconciliation with Maurice. He has promised to give a decision this month on whether he is prepared to reactivate the Bee Gees duo.

Maurice makes his first TV solo appearance tomorrow (Saturday), when he guests in BBC-1's new panel game "So You Think You Know The New Laws." He also took part in ITV's Hogmanay show this week, when he sang with his wife Lulu.

Kenny Rogers in cabaret

Kenny Rogers and the First Edition make their British cabaret debut when they appear at Middlesbrough Variety Showboat Club for the week commencing January 25. But the group's projected Scottish appearances — at Aberdeen (21), Glasgow (22) and Edinburgh (23) — have been dropped because of the pressure of other commitments.

U.S. award for Stigwood

Robert Stigwood is to be presented with a top award from America, to acknowledge his decision to back the London presentation of the stage musical "Hair" and for his idea for free open-air concerts. It is the "Trendsetter Award for 1969," presented by Billboard magazine.

GEORGIE RECORDING AGAIN

Georgie Fame will spend most of January in the recording studios, completing tracks for a new album and single. His sessions will be produced by Alan Price, who is currently co-starring with Georgie in BBC-2's "The Price Of Fame" series.

Tull tours here in May JETHRO SINGLE IS SCHEDULED

JETHRO TULL is to undertake a major British concert tour in May, but it will not play any live dates in this country beforehand. Supporting groups are currently being set for the tour, which is expected to last four weeks — similar to Tull's last British tour in September and October.

The group's next American tour, due to open in New York on March 6 or 7, has already been doubled in length — it was originally planned as a month-long tour, but it will now last two months.

Tull is at present engaged in extensive recording sessions until January 14, working on its new album which is due for release by Chrysalis in early March.

Following its one-week Scandinavian tour from January 15, the

group flies to France for a concert at Paris Olympia on January 25. As previously reported, other overseas engagements for Tull include a four-day trip to Los Angeles in mid-February to record a Jack Good TV special, followed by a two-week German tour.

AS WE CLOSED FOR PRESS, WE LEARNED THAT A NEW JETHRO TULL SINGLE IS BEING ISSUED BY CHRYSALIS ON JANUARY 16. IT IS AN IAN ANDERSON SONG TITLED "THE WITCH'S PROMISE."



At a show-business wedding in London last Saturday, Paul Arnold of the New Overlanders married Carole Hammond, daughter of the group's manager. Pictured at the reception are TONY HATCH at the piano and (left to right) RCA's IAN GRANT, HARRY HAMMOND, JACKIE TRENT and PAUL and CAROLE ARNOLD.

COMING SHORTLY ON TV